



**Above:** ice blast – low temperatures on test day didn't help traction, but the diesel Golf still recorded some storming sprint times

there's a period of surge as the turbo's not sure how much boost to produce, clearly audible as a flutter under the bonnet, equating to around 1700rpm on the tacho. By 2500rpm this is all done and the boost really comes on strong, the bonnet lifts skyward, you're pushed back into your seat and the rev-counter races around the clock to 4500rpm, with a massive surge that barely tails off into sixth gear. Best of all, there's no trace of any smoke.

Once you're used to the way it behaves, it's easy to drive around the low-rev hesitation and you begin to revel in a very, very quick Mk4 Golf. In the wet conditions the Golf's ASR traction control system was working overtime, but flick it off and the tyres would light up in third gear if you mashed the throttle exiting lower speed curves such as the grunt on tap. That said, the sharp throttle response and nicely cosseted steering made wheelspin pretty

controllable, but careful use of the loud pedal is necessary such is huge pull on tap between 2500rpm and 4500rpm.

Downsides? It's a touch boomy under hard load, but in fairness at an 80-85mph cruise in sixth the noise levels are perfectly acceptable and it's a small price to pay given the intense levels of low-rev urge and top-end fizz that are on tap. Also, the dull engine note is a little underwhelming.

Do I like it though? You bet. Within a few minutes it's being peddled around hard with real pace and the engine's huge mid-range make it easy and relaxing to drive very fast. What's really impressive is that you feel you could take the Allard car to a track day and really have some fun upsetting the more conventional cars.

Granted, at £3454.50 fitted including VAT it's not cheap, but it more than delivers the thrills in a most unexpected way, as well as giving 38mpg!

But how does it fair against the clock? Weather conditions are getting worse as we strap the GPS gear to the Allard car, so getting decent 0-60mph time is going to be a struggle. Lloyd tries a launch first with the ASR on, then trying with it off. The results raise eyebrows, as he clocks a best time of 6.78 seconds, marginally quicker than the 1.8T petrol Golf, then covers the standing quarter in 16.1, some six tenths down on Nick's GTI.

The real difference comes when I record the in-gear times. Given that the PD130 packs six gears compared to the GTI's five cogs, this isn't an exact comparison because the ratios are vastly different, but nonetheless, the results are a shock. When the data is analysed, the Allard turbo-diesel has recorded a 30-70mph time in third gear of just 7.5 seconds. That's a storming 8 seconds quicker than the petrol car...

The fourth gear 40-90mph times are